

# Public Hearing and Regular Meeting

<b>Agenda Item #</b>	1 and 2
<b>Meeting Date</b>	September 24, 2007
<b>Prepared By</b>	Suzanne Ludlow, Community and Government Liaison
<b>Approved By</b>	Barbara B. Matthews, City Manager

<b>Discussion Item</b>	Proposed Takoma Metro Development
<b>Background</b>	<p>The Board of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) held a Compact Hearing on October 11, 2006 regarding the proposal to sell land at the Takoma Metro station and reconfigure the station's transit facilities. City officials and many others testified in opposition to the proposal. WMATA staff recently released their analysis of the Compact Hearing comments and made recommendations to the Board to proceed with the land sale. October 5, 2007 (at 2:00 pm) is the deadline for public comment on the WMATA staff report. The City Council is holding a public hearing before finalizing and transmitting its comments on the WMATA staff report.</p> <p>The WMATA Planning, Development and Real Estate Committee is scheduled to vote to approve the staff report at its meeting on October 11. Action on the land sale proposal could come from the full WMATA Board on October 25.</p>
<b>Policy</b>	The City Council is concerned with the accessibility of transit for Takoma Park's residents, employees and visitors.
<b>Fiscal Impact</b>	n/a
<b>Attachments</b>	Draft resolution and copy of Resolution 2006-58.
<b>Recommendation</b>	Hold public hearing; approve resolution.
<b>Special Consideration</b>	

Introduced By:

**Resolution 2007-xx**

**Resolution Strongly Urging the WMATA Board to Reject the Recommendations  
Of the WMATA Public Hearing Staff Report and to Direct WMATA Staff to Determine  
The Size and Configuration of Land at the Takoma Metro Station Needed  
For Current and Future Transit Use**

**WHEREAS,** a proposal to sell land for development at the Takoma Metro station was accepted before the amount and configuration of land needed for transit use was determined; and

**WHEREAS,** the size and configuration of land remaining for transit use under the proposal is unsuitable for transit use in that it precludes an increase in the number of bus bays to meet even the need identified in the Takoma Transportation Study; requires an inadvisable mix of bus and private vehicles, causing congestion and confusion and slowing bus travel times; greatly reduces the size and attractiveness of the main entrance of the station; reduces accessibility of the station for handicapped and Kiss and Ride patrons; and reduces the amount of space for short-term parking on the site; and

**WHEREAS,** the size and configuration of the parcel to be sold precludes meeting key conditions of development of the site identified in the Takoma Central District Plan, a component of the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan, including ensuring that transit needs are met first before development of the site, ensuring that there is a minimum of a 50 foot buffer between development on the site and the apartments on Eastern Avenue, ensuring that the same number of parking spaces on the site remains accessible to the public after development, and ensuring the station is attractive and well-functioning; and

**WHEREAS,** the Central District Plan also calls for a western entrance to the station which, while not precluded by the size and configuration of the parcel to be sold, is not included as a component of the development plan; and

**WHEREAS,** significant problems resulting from the land sale in the size and configuration proposed have been enumerated in the attached Takoma Park City Council Resolution 2006-58, "Strongly Urging the WMATA Board to Disapprove the Proposed Amendment of the Mass Transit Plan Regarding the Takoma Metro Station So As to Preserve Full and Continued Access to the Station Facilities for Transit Users;" and

**WHEREAS,** WMATA staff recommend minor modifications to the site plan which do not address the significant problems of the plan, but reduce the functionality and attractiveness of the plan even further; and

- WHEREAS,** rather than make recommendations to maintain and improve the transit facilities of the station and to meet the conditions of the Central District Plan, the WMATA staff leave key decisions on parking, the Eastern Avenue buffer, and the creation of an attractive station entrance to others, while not providing them the option to change the size and configuration of the land to be sold so that those conditions can be met; and
- WHEREAS,** a public hearing on the proposed amendment to the Mass Transit Plan related to the land sale was held on October 11, 2006 before the WMATA Board; and
- WHEREAS,** at that Compact Hearing, District of Columbia and Maryland residents testified in overwhelming numbers that the land sale as proposed would be harmful to the accessibility of the station for their particular transit needs; and
- WHEREAS,** 40 District of Columbia residents or organization representatives submitted written testimony opposing the proposed changes to the transit facilities, and 12 District of Columbia residents or organization representatives testified at the Compact Hearing in opposition to the proposal; and
- WHEREAS,** 115 Maryland residents or organization representatives submitted written testimony opposing the proposed changes to the transit facilities, and 42 Maryland residents or organization representatives testified at the Compact Hearing in opposition to the proposal; and
- WHEREAS,** of the eight individuals or organization representatives that testified or wrote in support of the proposal or made comments that took no position on the proposal, five of these expressed the need for more parking than the 75 surface lot proposal would provide; and
- WHEREAS,** the Takoma, D.C. and Takoma Park, Maryland community is not opposed to development in general and has encouraged and supported recent development immediately adjacent to the Takoma Metro station; and
- WHEREAS,** Takoma Park has always been a transit-oriented community, has many neighborhoods without off-street parking, has large numbers of apartment buildings such that a majority of the city's households are renters, and is a community where 61 percent of the households have either zero or only one automobile; and
- WHEREAS,** reduction of access to the transit facilities at the Takoma Metro undercuts the transit-oriented nature of the Takoma community and harms many households that are transit-dependent; and
- WHEREAS,** it is the primary responsibility of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to provide transit facilities for the community now and for future generations; and

**WHEREAS,** sale of WMATA-owned land at the Takoma Metro station before an assessment of the size and configuration of land needed for transit facilities is done is an abdication of that primary responsibility of the Authority.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND THAT** the Board of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is strongly urged to reject the recommendations of the August 13, 2007 WMATA Public Hearing Staff Report regarding the Takoma Metro station; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the WMATA Board is strongly urged to direct WMATA staff, in conjunction with its partner transit and planning agencies, to determine the current and future transit needs for the Takoma Metro station and identify the size and configuration of land required to meet those needs before moving forward on any land sale of station property; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT,** if the WMATA Board approves the sale of land as currently proposed, the City of Takoma Park calls upon the Federal Transit Administration to deny its approval of the amendment to the Mass Transit Plan, as contrary to the requirement that the transaction promote transit-oriented development.

**ADOPTED THIS \_\_\_\_ DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2007.**

Attest:

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Jessie Carpenter  
City Clerk

Introduced By: Councilmember Austin-Lane

**Resolution 2006-58**

**Resolution Strongly Urging the WMATA Board to Disapprove the Proposed  
Amendment of the Mass Transit Plan Regarding the Takoma Metro Station  
So As to Preserve Full and Continued Access to the Station  
Facilities for Transit Users**

- WHEREAS,** Takoma Park, Maryland is a transit oriented community where 25 per cent of the workforce commutes by public transit and another 18 percent carpools, walks or bikes to work; a community where 61 percent of the households have zero or only one automobile; a community served by eighteen Ride-On and Metrobus routes, ten of which use the Takoma Station; a community which parks in the short-term-parking-only Takoma Station parking lot to take the Metro to run errands, attend meetings, and attend cultural and sporting events, and shop; and
- WHEREAS,** the Council and residents of Takoma Park have long supported the Metro system and have advocated for dedicated public funding of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (“WMATA”); and
- WHEREAS,** on June 20, 2005 the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (“WMATA”) and the Takoma Metro Associates Limited Partnership signed a Joint Development Sales Agreement (the “Contract”) for the sale of and development of approximately five acres of the 6.8 acres of bus, parking and open space located at the Takoma Metro Station; and
- WHEREAS,** the WMATA Compact requires the WMATA Board to amend the Mass Transit Plan before the proposed sale can be completed; and
- WHEREAS,** a public hearing on the proposed amendment to the Mass Transit Plan has been set for October 11, 2006 before the WMATA Board; and
- WHEREAS,** the City Council has reviewed the Contract and the July 2006 conceptual Site Plan (“site plan”); and
- WHEREAS,** the site plan confines the transportation facilities to the narrow and awkwardly-shaped 1.9 acres of land proposed to be retained by WMATA after the sale and complete redevelopment of the rest of the property; AND
- WHEREAS,** the site plan reconfigures and limits the transportation facilities in such a way that service for transit users, especially handicapped persons, is severely diminished and cannot be remedied without significant changes to the site plan or, if the conceptual site plan were approved, without significant expense by WMATA; and

- WHEREAS,** several studies provided by WMATA as background information for the public hearing show that there is a need for at least eleven bus bays on site plus space for lay-overs and the developer's transportation impact study acknowledges that the Takoma Transportation Study recommends providing twelve bus bays to accommodate growing ridership on Metro and Ride On; and
- WHEREAS,** the site plan and Contract provide for only ten bus bays, the space available for buses to idle on site is reduced from the amount of space currently available, and the area allocated for bus use would contain no room for future expansion; and
- WHEREAS,** bus bay projections normally only include those required to accommodate bus service that has been approved in adopted budgets or five-year transportation programs; room for future bus bay expansion at the Takoma Metro is needed for bus service that may be approved in the future due to increased demand and/or increased funding availability; and
- WHEREAS,** the site plan and Contract call for a reduction in the number of available parking spaces in the public parking lot to 75 spaces if the surface lot option is chosen or 128 spaces if the two-level parking structure is chosen, even though the parking counts presented in the developer's transit impact study showed the following occupancy levels (with parking restriction information added): from 8:30 - 10:00 am, 96 cars in 99 legal spaces (includes 6 handicapped spaces, 5 Kiss and Ride spaces, and 1 Flexcar space available all day); from 10:00 am - 3:30 pm, 151 cars in 159 legal spaces; and, from 3:30 - 7:00 pm, 120 cars in 72 legal spaces; and
- WHEREAS,** scattered on-street parking spaces in front of the townhouses will provide some additional public parking, but will cause significantly-increased congestion on site and in the shared bus/car traffic circle as people try to find parking after the small parking lot is full; and
- WHEREAS,** dropping people off at the station will be much more difficult as the seven Kiss and Ride parking spaces are split into two locations—one at the bus entrance to the station and one on an interior road requiring patrons to use the bus/car traffic circle—neither of which is adjacent to the elevator entrance, as compared to the current situation which has eight Kiss and Ride parking spaces near the elevator and separated from bus traffic; and
- WHEREAS,** persons with mobility handicaps in particular will find diminished accessibility to the Takoma Station as no convenient drop off access to the elevator tunnel is available, although, given the design and human nature, it is expected that persons will enter the bus/car traffic circle and stop in the circle to discharge a disabled person near the elevator even though it will cause a disruption in bus traffic at the station; and
- WHEREAS,** the site plan reduces the space available for bicycle parking and storage at the station, and does not provide for bicycle routes through the site, even as the Metropolitan Branch Trail is poised to create significant additional bicycle traffic

to and from the Takoma Metro; and

**WHEREAS,** the site plan does not include the needed western entrance to the elevator or to Fourth Street as recommended by the Takoma Central District Plan, a component of the DC Comprehensive Plan; and

**WHEREAS,** the constrained land area available for bus use, the reduction in short-term parking, the congestion of a shared bus/car traffic circle, the reduced access to the elevator for handicapped and other patrons, the reduced facilities for bicycles, and the reduced access for Kiss and Ride patrons are fundamentally inconsistent with the recommendations of the Takoma Central District Plan that “Redevelopment planning must recognize that the primary function of the Metro station site is to provide transit services. Secondary functions accommodating the needs of the local business community or potential new development must be designed in a manner to support current and future transit needs at the station;” and

**WHEREAS,** the proposed project reduces and does not enhance the effectiveness of the community’s mass transit facilities and reduces coordination between mass transportation and other transportation modes, contrary to the requirements of the Federal Transit Administration’s (“FTA”) joint development guidelines; and

**WHEREAS,** the proposed project would further reduce levels of service in failing adjacent intersections and increase traffic congestion such that the developer’s transit impact study notes the delay time at the Blair/Cedar/4th Street intersection would operate with a 19 minute delay and southbound Blair Road would operate with a 55 minute delay during the afternoon rush hour, causing havoc with bus schedules and anger from drivers and neighbors; and

**WHEREAS,** WMATA has neglected to explore alternative design approaches to the proposed development that facilitate, rather than reduce, access for transit patrons to transportation facilities and that improve, rather than constrain, the present and future transportation efficiency of Takoma Station; and

**WHEREAS,** the transit needs of the residents of Takoma Park, Maryland could be significantly and negatively affected by the proposed development if it goes forward as proposed in the Contract and site plan; and

**WHEREAS,** if WMATA should allow the proposed development to proceed, pursuant to the Contract, WMATA will be responsible for the costs of all of the transit-related improvements, which could easily exceed the sales price of the property, in order to meet the accessibility needs of handicapped patrons and to provide adequate bus and parking facilities for transit users; and

**WHEREAS,** WMATA has not provided essential financial information on the cost of the changes to the transit facilities so that the public can evaluate the costs and benefits of the proposal; and

**WHEREAS,** construction of residential units with two-car garages and front-door parking does not advance Transit Oriented Development goals, especially when the development of such units limits access to communities dependent on transit facilities; and

**WHEREAS,** the FTA must approve the final sale of this property for development and can do so only if the proposed development meets federal standards for Transit Oriented Development; and

**WHEREAS,** WMATA officials submitted their request on July 14, 2005 for federal approval of the sale.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND THAT** the Board of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is strongly urged to disapprove the amendment to the Mass Transit Plan which would accommodate this proposed reconfiguration of the transportation facilities at the Takoma Metro Station; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the City Council opposes the reconfiguration of the Takoma Metro Station site in any way which reduces, rather than enhances, Takoma Park's transit options and opportunities; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the City of Takoma Park calls upon the Federal Transit Administration to deny its approval of the amendment to the Mass Transit Plan, as currently proposed, as contrary to the requirement that the transaction promote transit-oriented development; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the City of Takoma Park calls upon the Montgomery County Council, its state and federal elected officials, and the Federal Transit Administration to assist Takoma Park in ensuring that the FTA, WMATA and the District of Columbia properly consider the impacts of development at the Takoma Metro Station on the Takoma Park/Takoma, D.C. community.

Adopted this 3rd day of October, 2006.

Attest:

Jessie Carpenter  
City Clerk